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ABSTRACT

On the Northern Cheyenne Reservation--where the alcoholism rate for Cheyenne persons 14 years and older is approximately 80%--there are numerous resources available to the recovering alcoholic, but children in alcoholic families are sometimes forgotten. There is a need for preventive programs to insure that today's children do not become the next generation of alcoholics. Effective prevention programs should include cultural education and should emphasize the development of self-esteem. This document consists of recommendations for alcohol education on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in the context of a personal account of growing up in an alcoholic home, becoming an alcoholic, and recovering from alcoholism with the help of an Alcoholics Anonymous program. Discussion covers the feelings and attempts to cope of a child of alcoholic parents. Recommendations for alcohol education include a school program emphasizing Cheyenne culture and the Cheyenne Circle of Life, with discussion groups, art, drama, and recreation used therapeutically. It is also recommended that a program for alcoholic parents should include parenting skills, better communication, child development, coping, and life skills. (JHZ)

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SELF-ESTEEM AND NORTHERN CHEYENNE CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....1
Body.....5
Conclusion.....16
Footnotes.....18
Bibliography.....19
Appendixes.....23

INTRODUCTION:

Self-esteem is defined as confidence and satisfaction in oneself,[1] it is how a person feels about himself, it is his overall judgment of himself and how much he likes his particular person. This is a generally acceptable statement. When we ponder this definition as Northern Cheyennes, how many of us can really honestly admit that we have a high level of self-esteem? What can be done to achieve good self-esteem?

Why is this so? Is it because we are a struggling people who still maintain our Cheyenne identity, but must also survive in dual worlds?

We may feel confident about ourselves for a certain length of time, and suddenly, when we are no longer able to cope, to regain our self-assurance, we turn to alcohol to try to overcome our innermost fears.

On the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, the alcoholism rate is approximatley 80 percent for Cheyenne persons 14 years and older.[2]

Most of the arrests made by the Northern Cheyenne Police Department are alcohol-related. The arrests include car accidents, marital issues, attempted suicides, child abuse and neglect cases, disorderly conduct, assault and battery, theft and intoxication. This is only a portion of the case reports that are alcohol-related.

For the years 1982-1983, 2,743 adults and juveniles were arrested. Approximately 95 percent of these arrests were alcohol-related. On the average 300 persons per month are arrested on an alcohol-related charge, Three-fourths male and one fourth female. The youngest person arrested for intoxication was nine years old. There are some offenders who are continuously arrested for repeated offenses. Compared to this year and last year at the same time, more alcohol-related incidences are evident, but this July there were no major incidences (deaths, car accidents) compared to July of 1983.[3]

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[1]Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield, Massachuetts: G&C Merriam Company, 1976).

[2]Montana Urban Association, Survey of Alcoholism on Montana Reservations, (Helena, Montana: 1977).

[3]Larry Flying, Chief of Police, Northern Cheyenne Police Department, Lame Deer, personal interview on alcohol-related arrests, Lame Deer, Montana, July 11, 1984.

The Indian Health Service lists five of the top ten causes of death among Indians as being directly related to alcohol; accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, alcoholism, suicide, and homicide. These five categories account for 35 percent of all deaths among American Indian people.[4]

According to the Northern Cheyenne Ambulance Service for 1983, there were 342 alcohol-related runs made, with 12 persons dead on arrival. And for 1984, up to June, there were 142 runs made with 6 dead on arrival, all alcohol-related.

The Northern Cheyenne Reservation has numerous resources available to the recovering alcoholic. There are the Alcoholism Project, Detoxification Center, Half-way House, several therapy groups, Family Services, counseling, and Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon (for the family of alcoholics), and Ala-Teen (for the children of alcoholics), all of which are based on the same Alcoholics Anonymous philosophy and traditions.

The sometimes forgotten members in an alcoholic family are the children. The resources now available to children of alcoholics are Ala-Teen, Family Services, or school counselors.

To date, there has never been any information or statistics gathered regarding the number of Northern Cheyenne children who have been raised or who will be raised in alcoholic homes or the effects it has on the child, or how they are motivated to become the next generation of alcoholics. The effects of adult children who have grown up in a situation where they come from an alcoholic home has never been recorded to date.

Why does the cycle of alcoholism continue through generations? I was raised in an alcoholic home and even though I despised my father's alcoholic behavior and told myself, I will never be like him, why did I become an alcoholic, just like my father? We often see this on the reservation. Even if the parents are recovering alcoholics or no longer using, the children are drinking, following in the paths of their parents.

I am very concerned about the alcoholism use on our reservation, but what alarms me the most is the effects we have on our own children. How can we successfully deal with and help prevent this cycle of alcoholism in our children?

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[4]J. M. Andre, The Epidemiology of Alcoholism among American Indians and Alaskan Natives, (Albuquerque: Indain Health Service, 1979), p. 2.

With the alcoholism rate so extremely high on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, we need to start working with children to better educate them concerning all aspects of alcoholism: The medical view, disease concept and effects of alcoholism in the home. A better sense of self-worth and self-esteem needs to be developed, so Northern Cheyenne children will be able to constructively deal with all of negative emotions, such as feelings of anger, fear, frustration, shame, resentments, jealousy, guilt, and self-hate in positive ways instead of using alcohol as an escape from reality.

When a child grows up in an alcoholic home, he is usually at the mercy of his parents' alcoholic outbursts. If the parents of any extended family members are using alcohol, there is never any type of consistency in the home environment, no limits and usually very little discipline. If the parents are using alcohol, children are allowed to do whatever they please without strong parental supervision. The child-rearing practices vary greatly on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Some families are traditional families (families who adhere to the old ways and traditions of the Northern Cheyenne) and numerous Northern Cheyennes raise their children in the whiteman's way. So it is difficult to say which child-rearing practices the family uses. In a traditional family, the child is left to make his own decisions about what he wants to do.

It is my personal belief that every Northern Cheyenne family living on the reservation is affected some way by alcoholism. If it isn't a parent who is an alcoholic, it may be an uncle, brother, sister, or cousin. Because of the extended family unit, consisting of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and numerous cousins, the alcoholic parent knows their child will be cared for by a member of the family and this helps enable the alcoholic parent. Because the Cheyenne people are a caring people who look out for their own, a child will always have somewhere to go to be cared for. A family will usually take in people, even if the household is already overcrowded and food is short, or in some cases gone. Whatever is in the house is shared by all who live there. It is hard for a non-Indian to understand, but that is the way it is.

Alcoholism is a family disease.[5] It not only affects the alcoholic

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[5]Ruth Fox, M.D., The Child in an Alcoholic Home, Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism, 1977, p. 51.

but the entire family. The alcoholic and spouse have better resources available to them. Northern Cheyenne children of alcoholics often find themsleves unable to deal appropriately with their home situation. The security, love, warmth, parental teaching, and supervision is non-existent. It is very difficult for Cheyenne children to verbalize their inner feelings about their home life. The children love their parents and fear they may be removed from the home if any personal problems are discussed with anyone other than family.

We need to emphasize the importance of good self-esteem to help conquer the disease of alcoholism on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. A higher sense of self-esteem needs to be instilled in our children and young people to help them deal with themselves and their problems, so they will not have to use a crutch to escape. The children need to be helped immediatly as a preventive measure so they will not become the next generation of alcoholics.

BODY:

A strong sense of self-esteem is something that cannot be bestowed or taught to another person. A high sense of self-esteem has to be increased and developed by the individual person. Self-esteem has to extend within a person's own being.

Reaction formation is characterized by expression of the opposite of one's true feelings. The adolescent whose situation is known by his or her own peers may consistently make jokes and light-hearted remarks about his or her home situation, when in reality the child is totally frustrated. These above methods of coping with stress are all found in the emotional development of most children of alcoholics. Aside from normal emotions associated with "growing" pains, children of alcoholics must handle a variety of emotions for which they may be ill-equipped due to an inadequate state of emotional development. As emotional development continues, the child takes on a sense of identity or self-concept. Much of this self-concept is derived from the child's measuring his adequacy as defined by others. With the constant use of defense mechanisms, a true self-concept may never emerge. Some children of alcoholics feel that they were and are unwanted. They see themselves in positions of inferiority, inadequacy, and even worthlessness. Although such children behave in ways to generate the opinions others have of them, the feedback they get from others serves to confirm their negative self-concepts.[6]

Northern Cheyenne children need to be educated about alcoholism. They need to be made aware that they are not responsible for causing alcoholism, that they do not have to live like this, that alternatives are available (counseling, Ala-Teen). They have to learn to recognize that help is available and most importantly they need to know that they are not alone and do not have to bear the burden of being a child of an alcoholic by themselves. This is a very delicate situation to deal with because of the Cheyenne culture, but this can be accomplished with community awareness and involvement, and better alcohol education within the community, and with more emphasis on helping the children of alcoholics.

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[6]Robert J. Ackerman, Children of Alcoholics, (Holmes Beach, Florida; Learning Publications, Inc.), p. 66.

To develop higher self-esteem in Northern Cheyenne children of alcoholics there are certain processes to follow:

1. A Cheyenne child needs to be proud of his Cheyenne culture and he needs to learn more about his Indian ways to bring out only the positive parts of his self-concept.
2. He needs to learn how to deal with all of his negative feelings, and learn that he doesn't have to accept all of the negative outbursts of his alcoholic parents.
3. A Cheyenne child of an alcoholic parent needs to know that he is special and very unique, with positive qualities that are worth expanding.
4. Cheyenne children of alcoholics need to have responsibility and duties that he can accomplish successfully, thus feeling good in getting a task completed.
5. A child needs to develop verbal communication skills so he can feel free to talk about their hidden feelings.
6. Helping professionals working with Cheyenne children of alcoholics need to better understand the child's way of thinking, because of cultural differences. Some helping professionals have no concept of the unique Cheyenne culture and because of this:

An individual testing system, especially developed and designed for Cheyenne children, needs to be developed to test a Northern Cheyenne child's level of self-esteem, and how coming from an alcoholic home situation can affect children in any learning environment. A child sometimes is negatively labeled in a school environment. Educators sometimes fail to find out how a child's home life is, and don't correlate the alcoholism use in the home and the child's inability to learn at school.

There are now conventional self-concept tests such as the SEI (Self-Esteem Inventory) but this is geared to non-Indian children. A test geared to Northern Cheyenne children needs to be developed because of the different ways a Cheyenne child perceives things because of the cultural differences.

When working with a Cheyenne child of an alcoholic, the child needs to be made to feel special. An unspoken trust between the child and the person working with the child needs to be developed. It may sometimes be a long and hard process but if the child starts feeling more worthy and positive about himself, it will be well worth the hard work. The positive points

about the child need to be constantly reinforced and negative feelings a child is experiencing need to be phased out by constant positive feedback.

The child needs to know that he is a capable and loving person. Children also need to learn problem-solving. They need to define the unique situation and know all the different possibilities to the various situations. He needs to learn that there isn't just one solution to any one problem, but numerous alternatives and plans to investigate.

Cheyenne parents need to learn parenting skills. Some parents never had the correct parenting, so they never learned to be a stable parent and how to correctly raise children. A lot of parents don't even realize how much they can affect their child's attitude and self-esteem about himself.

There are numerous parenting goals to be reached, some are listed below:[7]

* How to help children feel good about themselves.
* Helping your child feel good about you talking with your child.
* Problem-solving with your child.
* Helping your child develop positive values.
* Dealing with tense and fearful children.
* How to handle angry feelings.
* Helping your children when you're feeling down.
* Learning new behaviors at home.
* Living together positively in the family.
* How to discipline your child.
* Considerations for your child's health.
* Getting along with others.
* Power to the parent in the schools

The (HELPING) approach (Keat, 1979) is very useful. In using this method, the important question always to keep in mind is "How can I help my child?" Helping is the key word. Keep the word Helping in mind, and take each letter and use it to look at your child. That is "H" stands for the Health of your child. The"E" represents the word Emotions or feelings of your child. The "L" stands for Learning, "L" is learning of your child. The "P" is People or Personal Relationships. "I" is Imagination or Interests. "N" is the Need to Know, and the final letter "G" stands for Guidance that your child's actions, behaviors, and consequences need. By asking yourself how you as a parent can

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[7]Louise Guerney, and Donald B. Keat II, Helping your Child, (University Park, Pennsylvania: N. P., 1980), p. 2.

HELP your child and by keeping in mind what area each letter stands for, you will be able to focus your efforts on the particular areas with which he or she needs the most help.[8]

Below is a relationship inventory to help a parent decide the type of relationship he has with their child:

1. Do the control issues get settled most of the time without conflict between me and other family members?
2. Can I usually work out ways to meet his or her needs when it comes to control issues?
3. Can I resolve the control issues so that my important needs are met?
4. Are control issues worked out so that the demands of the situation are met as well as his or her or my needs?
5. Do I spend any time with my child alone doing anything that is not a basic responsibility, such as feeding him or her, getting him or her to do things, or teaching him or her?
6. Is the time I spend alone with him or her free of conflict?
7. Do we both find the time alone pleasant?
8. Does he or she want to relate to me at other than necessary times? For example: Does he or she tell me about things he or she cares about or want to go places with me?
9. Do I think about him or her most of the time as someone I like to have around?
10. Do you ever decide that good feelings for each other are more important than having the child do something exactly the way you want it done when you can't have both together?

The inventory is composed of spearate issues all important in their own right.[9]

The above inventory could be adapted to be used with Northern Cheyenne parents. There is never any guaranteed way to raise a child but we as parents can find different ways to try to be the best parents possible. By being more aware as care-givers we can help our children attain a higher sense of self-esteem, thus allowing children to grow up to be emotionally healthy adults.

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[8]Guerney and Keat, p. 3.

[9]Guerney and Keat, p. 30.

I took a survey around in the community to determine the number of people who came from alcoholic homes, and how many people who were children of alcoholics, who they themselves became alcoholics. The survey used was C.A.S.T. (Children of Alcoholics Standard Test) which is used for both children and adult children of alcoholics.

I interviewed a total of 33 people. Only 3 people refused the survey. The age group ranged from 11 years of age to 45 years of age. The test results are listed in the Appendix C.[10]

This is a very personal matter to me. I am an alcoholic, raised in an alcoholic home but I am greatly concerned about the effect alcoholism will have on my own children. I am doing what I can to help my children and all the other Northern Cheyenne children who will be raised in an alcoholic environment. I want to help prevent and reduce the hurt, pain, and fear that I have personally experienced as an adult child reared in an alcoholic home.

By further research on this matter, I may be able to help someone lessen their pain and to enlighten them and give them the assurance that they are not desolate in their hurt.

I have used numerous factual items concerning children of alcoholics, but most importantly, I have used my own feelings of helplessness that I have experienced as both a child and an adult child of an alcoholic.

When I was a youngster living with my parents, there was never any real sense of security. I always had a sense of fear coming from within, I never knew what to expect from my father. One moment he would be kind, loving, and considerate, then just like that he would turn into a raving maniac, usually wielding a strap and would heartlessly whip me. After he finished, I could sense his uneasiness at what had happened. These were the times he would reassure me how much he cared and loved me. All sorts of thoughts went through my mind. As I grew older, I came to believe this, that you were hit because you were loved. What a warped way of thinking. It was not until years later and after a lot of mental and physical abuse inflicted on my own children that I was finally headed towards the true concept of what love was. It was not the unbalanced version of love I had experienced as a child. I had begun by loving myself and being able to love others.

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[10] Jim Hudson, Computer Specialist, Northern Cheyenne Computer Department, personal interview, August, 1984.

Because of these abusive episodes with my father, I somehow came to believe that it was really my fault and that I deserved the abuse inflicted on me.

Children of alcoholics experience cognitive confusion because their world is not similar to the real world and it is hard for them to distinquish the difference. They can't tell if the alcoholic parent is lying or making excuses. They don't know whether to believe the parent or not. Which is the "real" you? The "drunk" you or the "sober" you?[11]

In my own experience, I never could rely on the moods of my father, even at times when he wasn't drinking, he would go into terrible outbursts that were worse than when he was drinking. I never knew what to expect, at times when I expected to be hurt, I wasn't and when I needed his attention, maybe a lovable hug, I would be belittled both physically and emotionally.

Conflict, blame, anger, resentment, and guilt are further characteristics of alcoholics' homes and children are often told that their father wouldn't drink if they did better on their math tests or that their father was drinking because they were teasing a sibling. Children generally see themselves as the cause of parental drinking. Children of alcoholics' main emotion is that they are the only ones in this situation whose parent drinks too much; they feel that they can cure the drinking and know very little about the concept of alcoholism. Since they are told that they are the cause of their parent's drinking, they often feel insecure.[12]

I have experienced all of the emotions, blame, anger, and guilt. There were numerous times when I would accept the blame for my parent's drinking. I was a poor student when younger and I honestly believed my dad drank because of my poor grades. I would also go out of my way to blame myself whenever he drank. I had hundreds of reasons why he drank, all of which I blamed myself for. Every time I accepted the blame, I destroyed more and more of my self-esteem, until I had none left. I felt as though I was an outcast of the human race. I was full of self-hate and self-destruction.

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[11]Joseph C. Kern, Director or Alcoholism Treatment Services, Nassau County, Department of Drug and Alcohol Addiction, personal interview, quoted in Alcohol Topics in Brief, Alcohol and American Indians, August, 1980.

[12]Ron Arden, Alcoholism Counselor, Adolescent Program, United Hospital Outpatient Alcoholism Clinic, personal interview, quoted in Alcohol Topics in Brief, Alcohol and American Indians, August, 1980.

It has taken a long time and a lot of hard work to regain my lost self-esteem. Today I no longer blame myself or accept my rocky past. I love myself and continue to become more self-assured daily. I'm grateful to my higher power and my program for this joyous rebuilding of my life.

At the same time, youngsters cannot understand the role of the sober parent who also seems to act crazy by reacting more and more to the alcoholic, by ignoring the youngster and unable to give them any support or protection. Whereas the child may see the relationship between drinking and resulting drunken behavior, they do not understand the sober parent's behavior.

Youngsters are often angry at the non-drinking parent for not protecting them from the alcoholic or not getting them another better parent. They learn early on that they are not to expect anything because they do not deserve it or that people will disappoint you anyway. Mommy and Daddy haven't been good for me. Mommy was suppose to protect me but Daddy beats me up and I don't understand that. So, who is really going to take care of me? What's going to happen to me?[13]

From my own personal experience this was how it was. I would feel disqust for my mother, for the simple fact that she would never be strong enough to stand up to my dad. My mother would just stand there when I was getting hurt, both physically or verbally. At the time I could never understand how she could be so weak, to be so overpowered by my father. I have also done this to some of my children, I stood by and did nothing to intervene when they were being mentally or verbally abused by their father. I then understood why my mother never said anything; it was because of her fear just like my fear caused by my actions that provoked the alcoholic, by defending me it would create a much more frightening situation with the alcoholic.

Youngsters living in an alcoholic home do not usually turn to outsiders for help. Typically, parents transmit the message that alcoholism is a family secret and need to guard the family secret keeps children from alcoholic homes isolated from other youngsters, inhibiting their ability to make friends, to relax, or experience usual childhood good times and fun. They are fearful of trusting others or becoming close to anyone. Adolescent children of alcoholic parents have a harder time with intimacy, they are afraid to let people get

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[13]Jefferey Hollander, Director, Community Alcohol Abuse Program, personal interview, quoted in Alcohol Topics in Brief, Alcohol and American Indians, August, 1980.

too close. There is embarrassment or they are just afraid of being hurt becuase they have been hurt by the alcoholic.[14]

When I was younger, I withdrew from my friends, I was always afraid they would find out how much my dad drank alcohol.

My greatest fear was that when on one of the rare occasions when I had a friend sleep over, he would embarrass me. Observing my own children, I can sense this is why no one ever spends the night. I also had a very difficult time developing an intimate relationship, and when I finally did "fall in love", it was with an alcoholic, I still was relating to my father. I saw a lot of my dad in my husband. My husband, also an alcoholic, was a dominant person, who was very outspoken and aggressive. I looked to him as a father image, a replacement. We had a very unstable and emotional relationship. In the beginning of our marriage, I was constantly being abused, both physically and mentally. I now realize how I justified this abuse in my mind. At this time, I had little or no self-esteem. I honestly believed that it was okay to get battered. Today, I feel much better about our relationship.

There has not been any physical abuse for quite sometime. I know if it were to ever start again, I would not let it continue. I know I am a worthwhile individual, who does not have to stay in such an abusive situation. Five years ago, I would have not done much to get out of such a relationship. Since then, I am learning more about "battering" as a disease.

Children from alcoholic homes say they are "ugly", no one, stupid, hated, unlucky, pressured, disappointed, (time after time) betrayed, and manic depressive.[15]

Most of my life with these same types of feelings, I thought life was unbearable many times. I was very depressive and even suicidal. I had tried committing suicide on numerous occasions, ever since I was nine years old to the age of twenty-one years old. During this period of time in my life, I now know that my suicidal behavior was a cry for help. It took many years before I even realized how sick I was. I always had an empty feeling within myself. I knew I was hurting myself, but I didn't know why or how much, until much later when I finally completed a successful alcoholism treatment program. I

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[14]Brian Gleason, Program Coordinator, Teenage Alcohol Abuse Rehabilitation, personal interview, quoted in Alcohol Topics in Brief, Alcohol and American Indians, August, 1980.

[15]Ellen Morehouse, Director, Student Assistance Program, personal interview, June 26, 1981.

now see some of these same feelings in my children, and can relate to how they are feeling.

When a young person reaches the mid-twenties the effects of growing up in an alcoholic home begins to become apparent. These now adult children of alcoholics begin to experience a loneliness which doesn't make sense to them. They become aware of feelings which separate them from others and find themselves depressed. As this depression occurs more frequently and lasts longer, the source of depression seems unidentifiable. Feelings of being fearful and anxious occurs more frequently; again the source is not identifiable.

This is exactly how I felt until I realized that there was help for me. Now with more information available on this subject, children of alcoholics have a better chance than I did. With all the information now available there is much brighter outlook for children who have been raised in an alcoholic home. When I was a youngster I never talked about my home situation, everyone thought I was being raised in a model home.

Youngsters living in an alcoholic home do not usually turn to outsiders for help. Typically, parents transmit the message that alcoholism is a family secret, a secret so terrible that it can't be shared with anyone.[16] Such phrases as these are common: "Don't tell mom you saw me hide a jug outside", "When grandma comes, don't tell her that Dad was drinking last night." The child knows his home situation is different from others and that it mustn't be exposed. The need to guard the family secret keeps children from alcoholic homes isolated from other youngsters, inhibiting their ability to make friends or to experience a normal childhood. They are fearful of trusting others or becoming close to anyone.

When younger this was the exact nature of my behavior, I isolated myself from social and school functions. On one occasion I had a girlfriend speend graduation weekend with me. On graduation night my dad insisted that my girlfriend and myself ride home with him instead of staying for graduation activities. Can you imagine the humiliation and shame I experienced when my dad tried to hustle my girlfriend? For weeks after this incident, I completely ignored her. Since I have not seen her for several years I have never been able to discuss this with her.

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[16]Claudia Black, It will Never Happen To Me, 9denver: MAC Printing and Publications Division, 1981), p. 32.

Alcoholism is a family disease. I never accepted my father's drinking as a disease until I was older. I had my own denial system, which is very characteristic in an alcoholic situation. Growing up in an alcoholic home is very stressful.

There are all kinds of emotions that I have experienced. These feelings consisted of feeling afraid, sad, angry, guilty, and embarrassed. I never talked about how I felt and my feelings were all confused. I never felt I could be comfortable in my relationship with my father. I didn't feel I could be honest with him. When as a role-model to me, he was continuously dishonest to those all around him. I could never trust anyone, now I can. But before this was possible, it took a lot of hard work, counseling, and the patience and fellowship of people who cared for me, with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous. This has become a reality. It has taken years before I could feel comfortable with my situation as a child. The pain, hurt, and shame is slowly diminishing. Someday it will all be non-existent and I will be able to let it pass as in a bad dream.

Children raised in alcoholic homes enter adulthood coping with life's problems in ways which have proven to be of great value to them; such as being responsible, adjusting, or placating, as well as not talking, not feeling, and not trusting. A significant dynamic that has occurred is that they all have made some decisions about their own drinking. And as the majority of Americans do, most have decided that they will drink. They decide at about the same ages and for the same reasons that children of non-alcoholic families choose to drink. These youngsters usually begin to drink in their early teens, drinking to have fun, drinking because friends want them to, drinking out of curiousity, and for some, drinking out of defiance. They want to drink to feel grown up. They learn to drink to escape. As typical of most teenagers, they often drink to get drunk. They are experimenting. But most significantly, they drink with an extra belief, a belief that, "it will never happen to me". This is a belief that ascribes to their knowing that their parent is an alcoholic, but believing that alcoholism is a matter of lack of will power, that it is a control issue. This belief says, "I have seen enough and I know enough about what alcohol can do to a person. I will be different".

I started drinking when I was thirteen years old. When my dad saw me drunk, he thought it was funny. I continued drinking. When I was drinking

I felt like a different person, instead of feeling ugly, I felt attractive. I no longer felt fat, but felt slim. I was no longer shy or scared, the liquor gave me a false sense of security that I never had when not drinking alcohol. The liquor made me feel like another person, I used alcohol to escape reality. My alcohol use continued all through high school. After graduating from high school, I started partying and stayed out until all hours. I still didn't realize that I had a problem with alcohol.

Fate changed my drinking. I was raped which resulted in a pregnancy. I was bitter about what happened, but I knew I had to be responsible for the consequences that my use of alcohol resulted in. For six years I remained sober. I had since married and had another three children, but then because of a break-up in my marriage, I started drinking again. When this occurred, my whole life started falling apart. My three children were placed in a foster home and I had to get help for myself. I received help in 1975 and was sober for about seven years. I now had a total of ten children. I never used used any program, but stayed sober on my own, but during this time I became dually addicted on prescription drugs. After several more slips, I finally went to my second alcoholism treatment center.

I am very grateful for the help I received at Thunderchild in Sheridan, Wyoming. This was the first time in my entire life that I faced my problem and honestly did something about it. After completing my treatment program, I felt like a big load had been lifted off my shoulders. Problems of my childhood and past were dealt with honestly and I truly felt like a totally new person. When a person is an alcoholic, it is an easy road, but with the help of alcoholics anonymous and the fellowship of this program, and especially with my higher power, I know I will succeed. It has not been easy, but I must always remember, I just have today. I have learned to let go of yesterday and not to worry about tomorrow, for it has not come yet. I now have a reason to go on, the will to feel good about myself and the world I live in. Something that I was indifferent about not too long ago. Presently, I am working on myself, and feel I will continue to do so until the day I die. My future seems unimportant, I will accomplish whatever I hope to as long as I only live for today. I need to be around sober people and need to continue to work with my Alcoholics Anonymous program. I am now able to forgive the unhappiness of my childhood, I now look at the happy moments and I can now forgive my dad. I can now love him for himself and with the realization that I love my parents very much.

CONCLUSION:

I feel confident that my children have a better chance then I did. There is more alcohol awareness today. When I was growing up, alcoholism was a deep dark secret. My children have problems relating to alcohol use in our home, but at least now they have a chance. They can share their feelings with me, and I, in turn, may help them. By being supportive and honest with them, I am not afraid to discuss any aspect of my disease with them. Family counseling and Ala-Teen can be very constructive to them. I want the best for my children. I want them to grow up to be productive, emotionally healthy adults. I have emphasized education and how important it is to learn all you can.

With Family Recovery, I have found a lot of emphasis has been put on the alcoholic and the spouse but more often than not the children have been forgotten. I would like to see the helping professionals on the Northen Cheyenne Reservation be better educated and more aware of the children who come from alcoholic homes, and to learn more about the problems and difficulties that these children are experiencing. The school system needs to adopt some form of alcoholsim education.

I would like to see groups of children who are in alcoholic homes to receive some type of services. An ideal situation would be a program for youths from ages six through seventeen. The children would be divided into appropriate age groups, 6-9 years, 10-14 years, and 15-17 years old. The initial program would be geared towards helping young people understand themselves, to develop a strong self-concept, to learn how to appropriately express their feelings in a positive way, and how to teach children how to deal with life in an alcoholci home, to educate them about the disease of alcoholism. A high emhasis would be put on Cheyenne culture and the Cheyenne Circle of Life. Discussion groups could be formed additionally and art, puppets, storytelling, and role playing would be part of the therapeutic recovery process. The program would have a supportive and informal environment. the program would also include recreation, crafts, tutoring, and group therapy. It would also be very rewarding to have a parent group, (in a separate facility) to help alcoholic parents learn parenting skills, coping skills, better communication skills, child development, along with other important life skills.

The facility would be funded through a federal grant. The persons implementing this program would consist of people who have knowledge of alcoholism, social workers, alcoholism counselors, and volunteers from human service programs and the community. This is now just a dream, but in the future someone

may finally realize that efforts must be made on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, and someday the existence will become reality of this program. We need to unite as Indian people, to become more aware of this problem that is constantly continuously destroying our people. We need to come to the realization that in order to become a stronger people, we must get involved, starting with the younger people, to be able to save our pride and dignity. We must realize the longer we are misinformed or indifferent, the worse the problem will become. All community members and leaders must get involved, everyone must, the schools, churches, social and health agencies, to once more become a strong and healthy people.

When writing this paper I was very honest. If I can start making people realize that our future lies with our children and if one person learns from my experiences and if it helps turn their life around, all of my efforts and hard work will be worth it. One quote I have heard before and which stays in my mind is, "There is no greater task before us than the education of our children; our past is their present, their present our future". Anonymous.

FOOTNOTES

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A.....Page 24
Appendix B.....Page 26
Appendix C.....Page 27
Appendix D.....Page 29

APPENDIX A

C.A.S.T. can be used to identify latency age, adolescent, and grown up children of alcoholics.

Please check (X) the answer below that best describes your feelings, behavior, and experiences related to a parent's alcohol use: Take your time and be as accurate as possible. Answer all 30 questions by checking either "yes" or "no".

Sex: Male_____ Female_____ Age_____

Yes	No	Questions
_____	_____	1. Have you ever thought that one of your parents had a drinking problem?
_____	_____	2. Have you ever lost sleep because of a parent's drinking?
_____	_____	3. Did you ever encourage one of your parents to quit drinking?
_____	_____	4. Did you ever feel alone, scared, nervous, angry, or frustrated because a parent was unable to stop drinking?
_____	_____	5. Did you ever argue or fight with a parent when he or she was drinking?
_____	_____	6. Did you ever threaten to run away from home because of a parent's drinking?
_____	_____	7. Has a parent ever yelled at or hit you or other family members when drinking?
_____	_____	8. Have you ever heard your parents fight when one of them was drunk?
_____	_____	9. Did you ever protect another family member from a parent who was drinking?
_____	_____	10. Do you ever feel like hiding or emptying a parent's bottle of liquor?
_____	_____	11. Do many of your thoughts revolve around a problem-drinking parent or difficulties that arise because of his or her drinking?
_____	_____	12. Did you ever wish that a parent would stop drinking?
_____	_____	13. Did you ever feel responsible for and guilty about a parent's drinking?
_____	_____	14. Did you ever fear that your parents would get divorced due to alcohol misuse?

_____ _____ 15. Have you ever withdrawn from and avoided outside activities and friends because of embarassment and shame over a parent's drinking problem?

_____ _____ 16. Did you ever feel caught in the middle of an argument or fight between a problem-drinking parent and your other parent?

_____ _____ 17. Did you ever feel that you made a parent drink alcohol?

_____ _____ 18. Have you ever felt that a problem-drinking parent did not really love you?

_____ _____ 19. Did you ever resent a parent's drinking.

_____ _____ 20. Have you ever worried about a parent's health because of his or her alcohol use?

_____ _____ 21. Have you ever been blamed for a parent's drinking?

_____ _____ 22. Did you ever think your father was an alcoholic?

_____ _____ 23. Did you ever wish your home could be more like the homes of your friends who did not have a parent with a drinking problem?

_____ _____ 24. Did a parent ever make promises to you that he or she didn't keep because of drinking?

_____ _____ 25. Did you ever think your mother was an alcoholic?

_____ _____ 26. Did you ever wish that you could talk to someone who could understand and help the alcohol-related problems in your family?

_____ _____ 27. Did you ever fight with your brothers and sisters about a parent's drinking?

_____ _____ 28. Did you ever stay away from home to avoid the drinking parent or your other parent's reaction to the drinking?

_____ _____ 29. Have you ever felt sick, cried, or had a "knot" in your stomach after worrying about a parent's drinking?

_____ _____ 30. Did you ever take over chores and duties at home that were usually done by a parent before he or she developed a drinking problem?

_____ Total number of "Yes" answers (ALL CAPITAL LETTERS).

Score of 6 or more means that more than likely this child is an child of an alcoholic parent.

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APPENDIX B

Are you an Alcoholic?

To answer this question ask yourself the following questions and answer them as honestly as you can.

Questions	Yes	No
1. Do you lose time from work due to drinking?	_____	_____
2. Is drinking making your home life unhappy?	_____	_____
3. Do you drink because you are shy with other people?	_____	_____
4. Is drinking affecting your reputation?	_____	_____
5. Have you ever felt remorse after drinking?	_____	_____
6. Have you gotten into financial difficulties as a result of drinking?	_____	_____
7. Do you turn to lower companions and an inferior environment when drinking?	_____	_____
8. Does your drinking make you careless of your family's welfare?	_____	_____
9. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?	_____	_____
10. Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?	_____	_____
11. Do you want a drink the next morning?	_____	_____
12. Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?	_____	_____
13. Has you efficiency decreased since drinking?	_____	_____
14. Is drinking jeopardizing your job or business?	_____	_____
15. Do you drink to escape from worries or trouble?	_____	_____
16. Do you drink alone?	_____	_____
17. Have you ever had a complete loss of memory as a result of drinking?	_____	_____
18. Has your physican ever treated you for drinking?	_____	_____
19. Do you drink to build up your self-confidence?	_____	_____
20. Have you ever been to a hospital or institution on account of drinking?	_____	_____

If you have answered Yes to any one of the questions, there is a definite warning, You may be Alcoholic.

If you answered Yes to any two, the chances are that You are an Alcoholic.

If you answered Yes to three or more, You are definitely an Alcoholic.

(The above Test Questions are used by John Hopkins University Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland in deciding whether or not a patient is Alcoholic.)

APPENDIX C

Results of Survey:

Children of Alcoholics

Male	Female	Age
X		20
X		14
	X	23
	X	39
X		30
	X	37
X		42
X		22
	X	28
X		14
X		43
	X	34
	X	21
	X	35
	X	26
X		33
	X	12
	X	13
X		17
	X	36
X		45
X		37
	X	11
X		37
	X	29
X		35
X		30

Not Children of Alcoholics

Male	Female	Age
	X	No Age Given
X		38
	X	19
X		20

Alcoholics (both using and recovering alcoholics)

Total Number: 21

Non-Alcoholics

Total Number: 3

*There were less alcoholics because some of the surveys were answered by young people who have not used alcohol.

*The average age for both non-alcoholic and alcoholic homes was:

29.3077 (male)
21.7333 (female)

Results of Survey (continued)

There definitely is a correlation between a child growing up in an alcoholic home situation and the person becoming an alcoholic. We as Northern Cheyenne people need to unite together and find out how to use preventive measures to confine the high rate of alcoholism on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation before it is too late. We need to put action into our ideals. If we wait too long, a lot of our Cheyenne people will be dead and our Cheyenne culture will be non-existent. We need to work on our young people so that they won't become alcoholics.

APPENDIX D

FACTS ON ALCOHOLISM AND CHILDREN

More than 28 Million children in the United States (including adult children) are affected by parental alcoholism.

Approximately 50% of children of alcoholic parents become alcoholic.

Fifty percent of juvenile delinquents have family members with drinking problems.

A correlation exists between child neglect/abuse and alcohol abuse.

Problem drinking is the most identifiable cause of family stress resulting in child maltreatment.

Alcoholic parents sometimes abuse their children physically but more frequently the emotional neglect may have long lasting results.

Other studies on children of alcoholic parents have found them withdrawn, unable to concentrate, and running a high risk of developing emotional and behavioral problems as adults.

Children may take on unnecessary guilt and wrongfully believe that they are responsible for the alcoholic parent(s) drinking.

A recent research study in the Metropolitan New York area indicates that the children from problem drinking families average one to one and one-half years below grade level in most parochial/private standardized reading and math testing.

Reports indicate that maternal alcoholism can cause serious aberrant fetal development and infant addiction to alcohol.

The special needs of the "neglected child" must be identified and addressed whether or not the alcoholic parent(s) seeks help or even recognizes the existence of a drinking problem.